Government to meet the current newsprint shortage;

(b) whether the Murari Committee has since submitted its report; if so, what are its recommendations; and

(c) whether Government are also considering the grievances of the newspaper industry about the newsprint's price hike; if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (PROF. K. K. TEWARY): (a) Government have already decided to make available additional foreign exchange for importing newsprint to meet fully the gap between the demand and indigenous production. Indigenous newsprint mills are taking necessary steps to maintain regular production of newsprint so as to ensure its sustained supply to newspapers.

(b) and (c) No Committee known as Murari Committee was constituted. However, a Group of Secretaries comprising of Secretaries of Industry, Finance, Commerce and Information and Broadcasting was constituted to look into the problems relating to newsprint. On the basis of the outcome of the discussions of the Group of Secretaries, Government have decided to make available additional foreign exchange to the tune of Rs. 95 crores to import additional quantities of newsprint so as to meet the demand of newspaper industry for newsprint in full. It has also been decided to exempt small newspapers (periodicals) fully from the payment of customs duty and Medium newspapers (periodicals) to the extent of 50 per cent on glazed newsprint. The concession is available to such newspapers entitled to the glazed newsprint as per the Newsprint Allocation Policy 1989-90.

Increase in the prices of aluminium by its primary producers

1166. SHRI D. B. CHANDRE GOWDA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Primary producers of Aluminium increased the prices of aluminium metal to international level immediately after decontrol of aluminium on 1-3-89;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that due to temporary lower international prices of aluminium, primary producers have represented to Government for imposing duty on Import of aluminium;

(c) if so, whether Government propose to direct the primary producers to reduce their prices to bring it alongwith international level so that the aluminium consumers are benefited; and

(d) if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MINES IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD): (a) After aluminium decontrol on 1-3-89 the primary producers increased the price of Primary aluminium metal by about Rs. 2,000—Rs. 3,000 per tonne in order to cover the increase in the cost of production mainly due to increase in the cost of Coal and Railway freight.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) Several representations have also been received from industry against any proposal for imposition of customs duty and suitable action will be taken after consideration of all the representations at the appropriate time.

Since price of aluminium has been decontrolled with effect from 1-3-89, the question issue of directions in the matter does not arise.